

Good News Daily

Volume XVII

November 19-25, 2017

Number 47

Sunday, November 19

Psalm 66 *Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.* (vv.5, 16 NRSV)

This past year, I moved from Orlando, where I had lived for the past 16 years, to Daytona Beach. Initially, it was awesome! I spent evenings walking on the beach, enjoying the beauty of God's creation. Then the honeymoon period ended and I hit a wall of deep loneliness, wondering if I made a huge mistake.

The last thing I felt was gratitude. I imagine that the Israelites felt similarly as they wandered through the desert after leaving Egypt. Sure, God had done wondrous things, but was it a mistake to leave Egypt?

In my desert, I chose to start practicing gratitude even when my heart wasn't feeling it. Every night, before going to sleep, I wrote down three things that I was thankful for from that day. Sometimes it came easily; other days, I had to think long and hard before writing anything down (there are only so many times you can be thankful for your cat). But, over time, practicing gratitude became gratitude. I was transformed.

No matter what season you are currently experiencing, will you choose to remember the things the Lord has done for you today?

1 Chronicles 14:1-17; Psalm 67; Acts 28:14b-23; Luke 16:1-13

Monday, November 20

1 Chronicles 15:1-29 *So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.* (v.28)

Most Sundays I attend a traditional church service—hymns and organ, choir and chanting. I like it. I like the stillness and the quiet. I like the space to reflect and pray. I like the hymns that teach me how to think about God. But sometimes I want what David is creating here in this passage from 1 Chronicles. In a time when paper and ink was rare, the writer uses 29 verses to recount how David assembled an orchestra. The text lists the names of those who play harp, cymbal, lyre, and trumpet and those who sing and shout in praise of God. In the final verse, we see King David “leaping and dancing” on the streets as he accompanied the tabernacle (the presence of God) into the city.

Sometimes we need the quiet. But, sometimes, we ought to make loud music and shout in worship. Why? Because Christ has died; Christ is risen; and Christ will come again!

Tuesday, November 21

Psalm 100 *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* (vv.1-3)

The Lord gave me a decent voice. And I love to sing, especially to worship the Lord. But some of my favorite moments of worship are when I am with my friend Kurt. Kurt cannot carry a tune. I think he may be slightly tone deaf. But Kurt loves to make a joyful noise to the Lord. And I love to hear him sing because I know he is singing with all his heart. I think the Lord likes to hear Kurt sing too.

The command in this verse is not to sing if you have a really good voice. The command is to make a joyful noise to the Lord, no matter what that might sound like. We sing because “the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Revelation 21:3-4).

Therefore, friend, sing! Sing with all your heart (no matter what you think you sound like)!

1 Chronicles 16:7-36; Psalms 97, 99; Revelation 21:1-8; Matthew 17:14-21

Wednesday, November 22

Psalm 101 *I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is base. Perverseness of heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.* (vv.2b-3, 4b)

In today’s world, it is not easy to control what is set before our eyes. There is hardly a television show or movie that does not contain explicit content. Even driving down the road, our eyes are assaulted with things that are base. Our temptation is to think that we can handle these things, that they do not influence us. So we watch the show or movie; we listen to the music; we read the book. But these things impact our hearts more than we realize.

A couple of months ago, I decided to quit setting base things before my eyes. I set parental restrictions on my Netflix and Hulu accounts. I chose different books to read. The impact? My heart feels different, almost lighter. Evil and temptation have felt farther away. It is good.

Right now, take a moment and think about what you set before your eyes. What might God be asking you to walk away from? Try it. I dare you.

1 Chronicles 20:1-8; Psalm 109; Revelation 21:9-21; Matthew 17:22-27

Thursday, November 23

Matthew 18:1-9 *“If your hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.”* (v.8)

Sometimes the words of Jesus are hard to swallow. This is one of those times. When Jesus confuses me, I have to ask myself, what is he saying and why is he saying it this way? I bet that Jesus is being particularly graphic here on purpose, to make a point. He deliberately exaggerates so that we will grasp the worth of what he is offering us. Even our hands and feet are not as valuable as eternal life in his kingdom. If you have not yet done so, take a moment to read today’s Revelation passage. Soak in that image for a second—the closeness of God, the beauty and wonder of the kingdom, the freedom we are being offered.

Friend, as you give thanks today for all your blessings, will you value God’s kingdom over all those things? Take a moment now to offer God thanksgiving for eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

1 Chronicles 21:1-27; Psalm 105:1-22; Revelation 21:22—22:5

Friday, November 24

1 Chronicles 22:1-19 *“Now, my son, the LORD be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as he has spoken concerning you. Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed.”* (vv.11, 13b).

God calls people to participate in His work in the world. God called Solomon to build a sanctuary for His name among the people of Israel. God has called me to see a Jesus-centered community on every college campus in Florida. As I have recently reflected on calling and leadership, I am struck by how many times God calls those who are afraid. Moses literally begged God to choose someone else. The Lord has to tell Joshua three times to be strong and courageous. Elijah gets so scared that he hides out in the desert for months. God calls scared people.

Just last week, I heard God calling me to something new. And I sat there, literally trembling in terror. Can I do this? Am I the right person? What if I fail? What if I disappoint people? What if...what if...what if? But as I listened to God, I heard these same words that David spoke to Solomon, “The Lord [is] with you...Be strong and of good courage.”

Friend, how is God calling you to join his work in the world? Even if you do it scared, do it!

Psalm 102; Revelation 22:6-13; Matthew 18:10-20

Saturday, November 25

Revelation 22:14-21 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. (v.17)*

We live in a thirsty world. In my work with college students, I see all the ways they try to quench their thirsts. They chase vocational success, romantic relationships, altruistic significance, the approval of others—peers, parents, professors. If we are honest, we who are “grown up” are not that much different. I find myself pursuing the same thirst quenchers—love, acceptance, success. But at the end of the day, none of those things satisfy. When I stop long enough, I realize I am still thirsty. And then God reminds me where I can get the water of life. So I return to Jesus, usually with tears, confessing my thirst and my need for the water of life. And at the end of that day, I am satisfied. My heart is at peace, my soul is at rest, satisfied.

Friend, hear these words, “Let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.” Will you stop chasing other thirst quenchers and come to the living water?

Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Matthew 18:21-35

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